

# Lady Ballers Newsletter

Summer 2016

*Lady Ballers Camp presents our very first edition of Lady Ballers, a newsletter created to update our dedicated supporters on the organizational events as well as to thank everyone who has made this organization successful.*

Since inception in 2012, Lady Ballers Camp has grown significantly, reaching out to marginalized girls in communities all around the GTA to provide them with accessible, subsidized programming. We have used the game of basketball to connect young girls together and teach them valuable skills such as leadership, goal setting as well as teamwork. While some girls are beginning to have a strong basketball skill set, others have only seen the game being played but have developed an interest through watching. Regardless of the initial differences, the girls quickly learn that like most things in life, you get better through practice. The more times they practice, the more confident they get shooting or dribbling or asking for the ball or even dunking. They also become more confident outside the court as well, and are able to develop as individuals.



Being a young girl in today's world is especially challenging through the media's bombardment of the ideal woman. While it's easy to tell girls that they are beautiful and their opinion matters, it's becoming harder for them to believe it when some of them are not represented in the media. While facilitating a Vision Board exercise, some girls found it difficult to identify models in the magazine that shared their same skin tone. They eventually settled for images of successful and/or beautiful women several shades lighter than theirs. These images became their own standard of beauty, one that is neither realistic nor actually possible. Being able to discuss their finding however made for interesting realizations on how they see themselves at school and in the world. Having a safe space allowed the girls to speak freely and share without judgment.

Most of the programs and workshops that are offered are made possible through the generous donation of time and expertise from community volunteers and leaders. We would like to thank the volunteer coaches, as well as workshop facilitators who work to ensure every voice and opinion is heard. We would also like to thank our sponsors for believing enough in the programs to provide the funding to ensure that it continues. You are all essential components of the overall community it takes to raise a young girl in today's world.

Toyo Ajibolade, Program Director

*A huge SALUTE to our Platinum supporters*



*To all our Gold Supporters, we say THANK YOU!*

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# "Dunk Like A Girl"

By: Karmealia Turner

When I first heard this phrase I thought to myself, "Okay, but I only know like two female basketball players that can dunk". But there's so much more to the phrase than its literal interpretation. What it really says to me is that we are empowering women to have confidence in themselves. Dunking like a girl is about doing what you want without being concerned about what society thinks about you. It's about breaking barriers and stereotypes and being more than a statistic. Most importantly, it's about loving yourself.



Lady Ballers is about more than basketball, and although as a recreation leader my job was to teach them basketball skills (as well as other sports and activities), it was just as important for me to teach them life skills. Throughout the summer we focused on the fundamental skills of basketball, ball handling, passing/receiving, and shooting. I also introduced the campers to other sports such as soccer, and a variety of large group games. Through these sports and activities, they not only were active, they were also developing important skills that they can use in all aspects of their lives.

They say that your attitude determines your latitude. If you think positive and speak positive things, your mind anticipates happiness, joy, health and success. Negative thoughts bring up unhappy moods and actions. This is why attitude is an important skill that was introduced early on; the campers were always encouraged to think the best of themselves. Teamwork and fair play were skills that were stressed throughout the summer, as it is important to be able to work together with people even if you might not necessarily want to. Confidence is a big skill that we focused on as it goes along with the theme "Dunk Like A Girl". Self-confidence is something that so many young women and girls struggle with because of stereotypes and depictions in the media regarding what women should look and be like. My aim was to help the campers be willing to take risks and do what they believed was right. To allow them to make mistakes and learn from them and accept compliments graciously, by providing an environment that was accepting. Other skills we focused on developing were communication, leadership, work ethic, and maturity.



*Journeys filled with possibilities, opportunities and future made possible by amazing people like You!*

This is the inaugural edition of Lady Ballers newsletter and we're super excited!

In our 4+ years of existence, you have been there; right beside us, supporting us, holding our hands, and traveling the stormy weather together. Through your generous support, we have provided programs and services to 400+ girls from marginalized communities and neighbourhoods in Scarborough, Brampton, Mississauga, North York, Etobicoke and York South.

*For those who have given before, please consider giving again. For our new community allies, please support our cause. All donations \$20 and above will receive a charitable tax receipt.*

*We salute your effort and hope that you will once again give us this opportunity to continue to transform lives of girls and young women to brighter futures. We are committed to ensuring that the funds are used for the charitable cause. And together, we are Agents of Social Change.*



All that being said, the campers weren't the only ones that were learning. During my time at camp, the girls taught me to be a better coach. They challenged me to find new and different games and activities that were fun and exciting. They helped me to become a better listener and help each girl develop their potential. They encouraged me by being encouraged by me. I think that being an example of a positive role model and a woman who is highly involved in sport opened up their eyes to new possibilities for themselves. I can only hope that they have taken away as much from their summer with me as I have from them.

# A Commentary of Females in Modern Society

By: Esther Ukiomogbe

Behind every goal there is a reason as to why it is being achieved. Living in a society where males and females are not regarded as equals, the determination to prove stereotypes wrong heightens when females come together to achieve a common goal. The girls at Lady Ballers Camp have worked to break down barriers that have been bestowed upon them, in order to disprove stereotypes about gender. Through their dedication in sports and activities, the girls are able to embody strength and perseverance; characteristics not usually associated with girls in today's culture.

In a society that paints a picture of girls standing against each other, the campers at Lady Ballers Camp stand together. We embrace our passions and strengths even if they contradict society's image of what a female should be like. The girls in the camp show diverse talents and skills



Ashley & Esther

while also being able to accept their limitations. They eventually acknowledged their shortcomings as what makes them unique and were determined that it would not stop them from trying. As counsellors, coaches and mentors, all we ever ask from the campers is that they always try no matter the activity. The goal of the camp was to enable each of them to become the best version of themselves.

# A Day in the Life of...

By: Tofi A.

As a counselor, it is your job to guide, protect and teach your campers. But sometimes, it's your campers that end up teaching you. My campers have taught me a lot about life and being a better person over this summer, but most of all, they made me laugh.

If there's one thing the campers love, it's food. As soon as they got to camp that's all they thought about. "When's snack?" "Is it lunch time yet?" "I'm hungry" are just a few things I heard from them all day.

Normally after eating, people feel tired. With these children it was the exact opposite. They had so much energy after every meal. One camper claimed that the apples were "magic" and that's what gave them all the energy. The other campers heard and all of a sudden they ALL wanted apples.



The campers have great imaginations and are able to think of things so quickly that most people would not see in a situation. Unfortunately, those great imaginations sometimes made a mess. Once during art, a camper said "the paint is magic lotion and began to rub it all over her arms. I had to have a long conversation with her to convince her that the paint was just paint. Then of course I had to clean it all up.

One of the camper's favorite part of the day was when they went to the gym to play basketball and other games because they got to run all over the place. That was also one of my favorite times of the day because I got to leave them in the trusted hands of the basketball coaches. But the games were not just for fun. The children got to build skills as well as confidence. At the beginning of the summer, one camper said, "I can't shoot. I can't dribble. I can't do anything" but after a few weeks she said, "look how good I've gotten" and could not stop showing everyone her new skills.



It is very important for the camp environment to be a welcoming one for the campers. One of our campers that lived in a shelter said, "The shelters nice but it isn't home". It is because of children like this that it is so important to have camps. It provides them with a place that they can go to everyday, see their friends and feel a sense of home. It gives them a place where they feel like they belong.

# The journey so far

1) *Dunk Like a Girl*: 193 girls have participated in DLAG since we had our first one in 2013 as a one-day event through the Leadership Capacity grant of Girls Action Foundation to our Youth Leader Toyo. Through your generous support to Lady Ballers Camp, this initiative has evolved into a year round event. And MLSE/ Just Energy, you helped us make this amazing event go for 2 consecutive years 2016/2017, 2017/2018 without worrying about how to fund it. We certainly cannot thank you enough.



2) You helped *103 girls break the cycle of poverty* this year alone through providing access to girl-centred programs and services.

3) *Celebrating Leadership*: 25 girls graduated from Lady Ballers Camp's 12 week Emerging Leaders training.



4) *Fusion of Art and Sports*: 51 kids designed their own basketball jerseys in our art program. Using art, you helped kids create the foundation for artistic skills that support their dream-for basketball excellence.

5) *Restoring Connection*: Our campers from North York, York South, Brampton and Mississauga came together sharing one space in our Summer Camp 2016. Because of your help, we were able to rent a school bus to pick up and drop off campers from all locations and to all field trips the entire summer!



As the weeks continued and I was a bit more familiar with the girls' levels of self-confidence, I was curious and wanted to know their future aspirations. The girls participated in an activity called the "Vision Wall". All for a good purpose, the vision board allowed the girls to create their ultimate goals in life as they got the chance to think about how they see themselves in the distant future. The girls got the opportunity to plan out short-term and long-term goals that they want to do in the next month and year. All in all the women they will be tomorrow is just as strong as the girls they are today. During camp, I was pleased to see my campers come to me for guidance and recommendations on personal situations. I felt like I really made an impact on these young girls. Good luck to all the lovely campers I spent my summer with! I truly hope to see everyone next year.



# The power of you

Creativity, self-expression, individuality, and visualization are all traits that tomorrow's leading woman need. These are all skills that the future generation can use to thrive for the better. To be creative is to be innovative, and to be able to create new ideas. A creative mind forms individuality, a certain unique way each person perceives the world. This enables oneself to stand out in a crowd and say something new. Self-expression is to not be afraid to speak out, and to not be afraid to dig in deep in one's mind palace, and communicate what they have to offer. Well, without visualization, none of the traits mentioned above would be possible. The clearer the picture one forms in their head the more precise and the more successful they will be. At the Lady Ballers Art Program, this is what we thrived to achieve. We encouraged our future thriving woman to challenge themselves and their minds to reach the goals set out for them. With the help of their teachers and peers they were able to portray all the skills listed above by completing the many different tasks set out for them. We hope for a bright and successful future for all of our girls.



6) *Visualizing Futures Without Poverty*: 51 visions boards were created this summer by campers in our 2016 summer camp program. Each story board was filled with inspiring images, words and plans for education and a future.



7) *Volunteers gave 800+ hours this summer camp only*. Thanks to your support, we were able to provide volunteers with tokens and all the resources they need to help support girls from marginalized communities.

8) *Kids read 75+ books* in our Champions Reading program and summer reading events in 2016 summer camp period only! You help build literacy skills.



9) *50 pots of herbs and vegetables were planted* in our Tower Gardening program as part of our food security strategy.

10 One of the very few charities that consistently ensure that your dollars and in-kind gifts go to those who need them most - girls from marginalized communities. *That's why we aim to keep our administrative costs below 10% of our annual budget.*

400+ since inception? Wow! When we talk about marginalized girls, it means different things to different people. To us at LBC, it means racialized girls, new comer immigrant girls, girls living in poverty, girls considered "at-risk", girls living with disabilities, teen moms, girls from neighbourhoods considered "at-risk", etc. you have helped us provide transformative programs and services to all these girls. You

Rock!

# I am my own kind of beautiful

By: Hilda Oni

## What is self-esteem?

Self esteem is how a person values themselves and displays confidence in their own worth and abilities. Self esteem affects every aspect of our daily lives. Positive self-esteem gives us the strength to steer ourselves in the right direction so we can grow and better ourselves as people. Young girls show signs of self-awareness at ages young as four years old. Throughout a young girl's lifetime, self-esteem can fluctuate from high to low depending on her own experiences.

## How do I work on low self-esteem?

Low self-esteem happens to even the best of us but it is impossible to overcome the feeling. The best ways to deal with low self-esteem is to spend time with supportive people, take part in activities that make you happy and to always celebrate your accomplishments. Ultimately, self esteem is based on appreciating yourself for who you are and having inner confidence.



Here at Lady Ballers Camp, each camper is encouraged to always try their best, believe in themselves and learn from their mistakes. When I started at Lady Ballers Camp, my goal was to have the girls finish the summer feeling more confident than ever. After a week past by and I had some time to communicate with campers I realized I had the opportunity to truly influence these young girls. Our counsellors and fellow staff are always here to lend a hand to campers. Campers can confide in their counsellors for personal matters, issues and when they're in need of advice or feedback.



With the help of other counsellors, I created an activity called "Who Am I?" that allowed campers to really illustrate how they viewed themselves and what makes them happy. The results were outstanding. Some girls were unsure of how they see themselves which is normal; they are still finding themselves while others had no problem in doing so. Few girls had little faith in their artistic abilities but all girls agreed they wanted to express themselves by putting shiny glitter on their posters.

# Creating a Sisterhood

By: Ashley Amofah

*"Camp... Where strangers become friends and friendships last forever."*

In the first week of camp, the campers had already formed their own group of friends that they either knew previously or had made an instant connection with on the first day. Everyday as the girls became more comfortable in their groups and had become accustomed to familiar faces around them, they showed resistance to accepting someone new. Therefore, girls that did not initially find themselves in a certain group isolated themselves from everyone else or chose only to interact with the counselors. Thus, the question that I asked myself was "how are we going to bring these group of girls together?" My goal for the summer was to get all of the girls out of their comfort zones, removing the obvious cliques that they had made, and make new friends.



For the duration of the summer camp period, my co-workers and I facilitated various activities focusing on team building, developing trust amongst each other and even just learning more about the girls as individuals. Each activity we did pushed the campers to the highest degree, away from their natural comfort zone. They had to rely on each other for support and motivation in order to complete the challenges. These activities ultimately created a comfortable, fun environment for the girls to safely and freely express themselves. Instead of girls trying to conform to what the majority think is popular, they learned that knowing who you are and what you personally love is far more important. As the weeks continued, the girls' friendships grew and the camp became one cohesive group. I believe what the campers and even the counselors took from this experience was that in order to accept others we must learn to accept ourselves first, and when we do that no one will stand alone.

## Program Structure

Lady Ballers Camp is a not-for-profit charitable organization that develops girl-centred programs which encourages non-competitive physical, emotional, and educational development. In our commitment to social change, our vision is to create equitable access to recreational, leadership skills, food security, and sporting programs to all, regardless of their socio-economic background. We were registered as a non-profit organization in January 2012, and became a registered charity with Canada Revenue Services the same year.

### *Love - Keeping It Real*

This program runs in February and it speaks to how Valentine's Day should not be solely about notions of romantic love, but should recognize and celebrate girls' empowerment. Through open dialogue, creative activities and storytelling, the mission of the project is to generate transformative knowledge that embodies the voices and inclusion of all young girls that participates. Leading up to image creation, the workshops encompasses a range of topics related to the challenges and barriers that girls encounter on a daily basis. The core of the workshops revolves around educating and discussing different types of violence that exist beyond the scope of physical violence. Internal, relational, and systemic forms of violence are explored amongst the group such as self-harm, media's portrayal of unrealistic body image, hyper-sexualization of females, stereotypes, labeling, the bystander effect, and sexual/physical/emotional abuse.

### *Emerging Leaders - Rise Above and Beyond:*

This is a 12 week leadership program, delivered to marginalized girls with the understanding that they have great leadership potential because of the multitude of barriers they continue to overcome. This program fosters healthier and stronger communities, where girls and young women can rise and shine, and be true advocates for change.

### *March break camp:*

This is an annual weeklong program when schools are on March break. It incorporates all of Lady Ballers Camp programs and activities.

### *Summer Camp program:*

This is an annual six week program during summer breaks from schools. This incorporates all of Lady Ballers Camp programs and activities.

### *DUNK Like a Girl:*

This began as a one day event in March, 2013 as part of the celebration of International Women's Day where girls come together in activism, learning, and playing basketball games. Girls and young women come together to transform their generation as change agents by challenging gender violence, racism, sexism, and gender-stereotyping, particularly around sports. We discuss what healthy eating, realistic body image, and fitness are all about. DLAG has become a year-long program now with support such as we received from JCS Canada Charity Fund and the more recently Maple Leafs Sports Entertainment